

# The LENINIST

Gorbachev p2

Goodbye NCP? pp4-5

Founding the CPGB p6

Demo reports p8

## They've got thugs in blue! We need Workers' Defence Corps!

**L**IKE ALL genuine partisans of the working class, the National Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*) welcomes the Glasgow to London anti-poll tax march called by the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

The march, setting off from Glasgow on September 3 and to be joined by feeder marches from Liverpool and South Wales, will provide an excellent opportunity to mobilise the literally tens of millions who hate the Tories and their tax, and want to see them and it wrecked.

But what does the Labour Party say? "Have nothing to do with the march," it tells its membership; it is "dominated by Militant Tendency". Again this only goes to prove what we have always said about the Labour Party – it is a bosses' party, the "bourgeois party of the working class," as Lenin so aptly called it. Labour's recently released Thatchnockite manifesto makes all too clear that Kinnock leads a party which wants to run capitalism, not fight it. To ingratiate himself with the bourgeoisie, to show that their system would be safe in his hands, Kinnock fawns and scrapes, and completely dissociates himself from anything that challenges their law, let alone advocates breaking it, as does the campaign for non-payment and non-collection of the poll tax.

Labour's opposition to the march must act as a spur to all those who really have the interests of the working class dear to their hearts. The march must be given maximum support. As it weaves its way down the country, town by town and city by city, Anti-Poll Tax Unions should see to it that as well as providing the occasion for local demonstrations against the poll tax, workers are won to take strike action for the day.

This is the best way to ensure that the final, national, demonstration in London on October 13 is the most massive manifestation of working class power and militancy this country has ever seen. It is also the best way to prepare the working class for an indefinite general strike against the tax – only the working class, organised as a class, can smash the poll tax along with the government that introduced it. Marches and demonstrations alone, no matter how big, cannot do that.

Yet we all know what happened the last time the ABAPTF organised a mass demonstration in Lon-



### Maximum support and maximum protection for the Glasgow to London anti-poll tax march

don ... following it *The Leninist* said "never again". An estimated 200,000 turned up in a tremendous display of anger, determination and defiance, only to be subjected to a sustained, vicious and well orchestrated attack by police. Thousands were injured and 500 arrested. Subsequently a 'shop your neighbour' witch hunt has been launched, and already over 100 people have been hauled in.

As we have made clear, it could have been different. The organisers – who, after all, say they are revolutionaries – should have taken the lead in throwing up barricades against charges by mounted

police and speeding cop wagons. They should have distributed makeshift weapons, eg, iron railings and broken up paving stones. Using their stewards, walkie-talkies and other communications equipment, they should have co-ordinated the thousands willing and able to fight back against police terror.

Instead, while some 3,000 bravely fought back at their own volition – with the approval and sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the demonstration – the Militant Tendency leaders of the ABAPTF withdrew their 650 stewards and headed home.

If this cowardly act of desertion was not bad enough, leading Militant supporters then went on to blame the violence, not on the police, but "anarchists and lunatics". Steve Nally, ABAPTF secretary, insisted that "deliberate attacks" on the marauding thugs in blue had to be condemned, and promised on the bosses' media to "name names", in other words to line people up for arrest and imprisonment by the state.

Although these parliamentary Trotskyites have done their best in *Militant* to backtrack on the more outrageous rightist statements Nally and other leading Militant

supporters made in the immediate aftermath of Trafalgar Square, they have not disowned them. Why? Because Militant is tied body and soul to the Labour Party.

Militant desperately wants to avoid further expulsions of its supporters. Therefore it goes out of its way to prove itself the loyal left wing of Kinnock's party. That is why its supporters behave and act as good law abiding subjects of Her Majesty and why Militant has recently come out in support of Kinnock's version of the poll tax, the roof tax! In a recent editorial it advises the bourgeois state that it is a "good starting point" which, if implemented, would be "fairer" and "cheap and easy to collect" (May 18 1990).

Given this thoroughly reformist approach, while it is vital to give the Glasgow to London march maximum support, there can be no trust whatsoever placed in its organisers. Indeed, every effort must be made to facilitate a quick change of leadership. We need a real, not a fake, militant leadership of the anti-poll tax movement. To get it there must be the fullest democracy in the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation and on the march itself. Only then can the march be safe and the anti-poll tax movement effective.

- Marchers should be allowed to elect delegates to a march committee. It, not self appointed functionaries, should be responsible for every aspect of the march. Delegates should report back daily to the marchers and be instantly recallable.

- Local Anti-Poll Tax Unions must begin now forming Workers' Defence Corps to protect the march and the October 13 demonstration in London from police attack.

- Anti-Poll Tax Unions should be made up of elected and recallable delegates from local working class political groups, trade unions, trades councils, unemployed groups and tenants' associations and other working class organisations committed to non-payment of the poll tax.

- The All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation should consist of elected and recallable delegates from local Anti-Poll Tax Unions. Transform it into a National Council of Action.

- Break the Tories' anti-trade union laws and the Tory government. For an indefinite general strike against the poll tax.

**National Committee  
Communist Party of Great Britain  
(The Leninist)**





## Police Split

If we accept, for the sake of argument, that police figures (3,000 actively involved in the rioting on the anti-poll tax demo on March 31) are correct, then there are some interesting implications. I am sure, for a start, that the black flag brigade would be very happy to be able to field a tenth of that figure. Of course, the attribution of the "hard core" of the violence to anarchists and the SWP was a rather pathetic tactic to marginalise a much more significant phenomenon.

Bear in mind that there was very little significant opposition in the crowd itself to those who used violence. For every person actively engaged, there must have been many more who witnessed the events, who were part of the crowd but not actively participating in the looting, car-burning or whatever but who condoned it to a greater or lesser extent. For every one of the 3,000 there were many more latent sympathisers, many who gained first hand experience of the way the British bobby deals with trouble-makers.

I've always said that one blow on the head from a bobby's truncheon is worth several seminars about police repression etc.

The reaction to the Trafalgar Square events by the state machine was very encouraging. The senior ranks were eager to use the events as a pretext for introducing much tighter controls, CS gas etc but among the lower ranks (the ones who, as always, have to do the dirty work) I detected from the voices of those interviewees I heard a note of fear and disbelief.

Of course there was anger too — many had evidently realised that the violence which they routinely deploy is in fact a stick which has two sharp ends not just one. Had this riot been in Brixton or Toxteth they would certainly have failed to do more than see this as further "proof" for the racist attitudes which are so common among them, but this was different and it was clear that it had made them start thinking.

We must not be deceived by our own propaganda into believing that the police are a united, monolithic phalanx, totally set apart from the rest of us. The vast majority of them are working class men and women with a poor standard of education and no political literacy. But they live among the working class (or many of them do, at any rate) and this means that they are not a lost cause. When the crunch comes we will be surprised (though we should not be) to find a good number of them on our side. The same applies to the great mass of the armed forces, who remain sharply divided along class lines — long may that continue.

These issues need to be thought about. I would never for a moment deny the decisive importance of theoretical education, agitprop and the rest but the message behind March 31 is that it is in the sharing of a common purpose in physical action that the people suddenly discover their enormous power.

This is one reason why I hope the event is being studied and will also be dealt with in the pages of *The Leninist*. The poll tax and other Tory policies are likely to reveal a lot which we did not realise about the revolutionary potential of the present situation. This is what makes a Tory victory at the next election objectively necessary. Not only will it destroy Labour for at least a generation

and hasten the final collapse of all the opportunist trends on the left, it will also continue the process of class polarisation and radicalise a great many people, or at least open them up to political education and organisation, a role which can only be filled by the CPGB(TL).

MG Malkin  
Surrey

## Miners

Hatfield colliery on the edge of the Doncaster coalfield must be one of the most famous pits in Britain, as far as the left is concerned anyway. Its banner is frequently seen on marches outside the normal safe consensus where one would usually see trade union banners and certainly not Labour Party banners. Its officials have been frequent and welcome guests on the City of London Anti-Apartheid events, and on all occasions in support of the cause of Irish freedom and for the withdrawal of British forces from Ireland. Almost alone in the NUM it has opposed import controls and contrasted this with efforts for international solidarity.

The contribution of Hatfield NUM in working class struggle is a real one, so it must be particularly painful for all their comrades on the left to hear that it has now been targeted by the Coal Board for closure "unless there is a change in attitude at the pit". Other pits such as Markham and Brodsworth, both in the Doncaster coalfield, were given production targets to meet on threat of closure; not so with Hatfield, it is 'attitudes' more than coal production which so rattles the Board.

Undoubtedly this is a revenge attack in response to the Hatfield led resistance which swept South Yorkshire and stopped all 19 pits. The Board now complains of "a revival of old fashioned militancy" which bedevilled South Yorkshire in general and the Doncaster coalfield in particular.

For the branch activists who have moved heaven and earth to save the pit and protect the community, the letter is a new Catch 22 situation. We want to be part of the industry because of the existence of the miners' union. This is a cornerstone for progressive class struggle in Britain and a bedrock of proletarian experience and tradition.

We have long argued against the shortsighted 'stuff the pit' redundancy fever victims that the existence of the NUM is an essential contribution to the overall struggle for justice and a better world. And you can't have an NUM branch without a pit. However, the 'change in attitude' being demanded is precisely that we abandon the NUM, or at least most of its controls and restrictions upon management. It suggests we contain, constrain or repress the pitman's right to 'rag up' or walk off the job in protest.

Hatfield miner  
South Yorkshire

## Progressive Bureaucracy?

While agreeing with the major part of the reply of Alan Merrik to Mil-lenin in *The Leninist* (issue 90) there is one point which I think should be challenged and that is his

statement that: "We have always argued that the bureaucracy was never progressive..." (original emphasis).

I find it hard to believe that the bureaucracy cannot be defined as having acted progressively when it gave military and economic aid to the Cubans, Nicaraguans, Angolans et al, in defence of their revolutions against imperialist attacks and economic blockades. Surely also, in the act of defending the Soviet Union and its socialised property relations against imperialism, particularly during the last war, and the extension of the socialised property relations to the eastern bloc, the bureaucracy acted in a very progressive manner.

I think that comrade Merrik is confusing 'progressive' with 'revolutionary', and I would agree that the bureaucracy since the early 1920s has not been revolutionary (in the sense of not leading or initiating revolutionary struggles) due to the policy of 'socialism in one country'; a policy of restraining revolutionary struggles in countries outside the Soviet Union in order to placate the world capitalist forces, and thereby reducing the national CPs to pawns in the manoeuvres of the Soviet bureaucracy for self preservation. In fact the extension of socialist revolutions was opposed, as their success, particularly in the advanced industrial countries, would undermine and eventually destroy the bureaucracy.

I believe, unlike the Trotskyists who consider the bureaucracy to be counterrevolutionary agents of imperialism, that the bureaucracy had a dual role of progressively defending and even extending, albeit reluctantly, its socialised economic base on the one hand (the economy from which it drew its sustenance) while on the other hand politically it carried out a counterrevolutionary role in preventing socialist revolutions. A contradictory position, yes, but that contradiction is resolved when one considers that both sides of its dual character serve one purpose: to defend the interests of the bureaucracy, on the one hand against imperialism and on the other hand against the revolutionary working class.

Today, as *The Leninist* correctly points out, the bureaucracy is consciously seeking a return to capitalist property relations, not as the Trotskyists suggest, because the Stalinists are counterrevolutionary agents of capitalism, but rather I would suggest, that due to economic stagnation, corruption etc, arising from the bureaucracy's stranglehold, the economy can only be rejuvenated by alternative methods — one way is that of establishing workers' power and soviet type democracy and reviving a policy of revolutionary internationalism to defend the Soviet Union, which would be the death knell of the bureaucracy; the other way is to return to capitalism, the bureaucracy constituting a new capitalist class, thereby extending their present wealth and privileges.

P Conlon  
South London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

## WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

GORBACHEV says his forthcoming referendum on the introduction of a "regulated market economy" will be as "important" an event in Soviet history as the "October Revolution". That is only true if we use the logic of the Christian cult, which claims that the most important event in one's life comes after death, not after one's birth.

The October Revolution struck a massive blow against world capitalism and pointed the way to the communist future. It put the Soviet Union at the forefront of progressive humanity and inspired millions into taking selfless, heroic revolutionary action. We can predict with absolute certainty that Gorbachev's referendum will do no such thing.

Yet it would be fatal to play down its significance. Economically, politically and morally Gorbachev is in deep trouble. Gorbymania is a thing of the past, in the USSR at least. He is increasingly seen as a failure and a fraud. Therefore in spite of taking on constitutional powers far in excess of those of Stalin, Krushchev or Brezhnev he has to get the masses' consent if he is to proceed with his proposed measures, measures which it must be said are far more than just another package of half baked reforms.

Behind the social democratic facade of a "regulated market economy" the atomised Soviet population is being asked to consent to the final snuffing out of the once brilliant flame of socialism in the USSR, ie the restoration of capitalism. Genuine communists should be in no doubt, that is what is meant by a "market economy", regulated or not.

Gorbachev and his cohorts do not deny that, even in the short term, a "regulated market economy" will produce a doubling of many prices and at least ten million unemployed. Certainly, if they succeed in their eventual aim of full blown restoration, far, far worse is unquestionably in store. Capitalism in the USSR will be more like the South American than the Western European sort, it will produce tens of millions permanently unemployed, sprawling shanty towns, starvation and mass pauperisation.

So how can Gorbachev — who in an act of 'masterly' PR has just increased his pay packet to £4,000 a month — persuade a hard pressed Soviet population to accept his version of capitalism, let alone its grim reality? He tells them that it is either 'regulated' capitalism and ten million unemployed or bureaucratic socialism, economic collapse and forty million unemployed. In other words he says there is no choice.

Of course, the outcome of the referendum is far from certain. Democracy, even sham democracy, is a dangerous game. No one will vote for price increases and mass unemployment with enthusiasm. Nonetheless the Gorbachevites have the initiative.

The real problem for the masses, though, is that, as Gorbachev says, at the moment there is no alternative. The main 'opposition' forces — the nationalists, Democratic Platform 'communists', the 'radical' inter regional group — all support the restoration of capitalism in one form or another. Even the trade union movement — official and unofficial — is committed to the "market system", albeit with various safeguards.

Because the working class lacks the leadership of a real Communist Party — fighting to carry through a political revolution against the traitor Gorbachev — it has no vision of genuine socialism, only an all too fresh memory of the lies, failures and betrayals of bureaucratic socialism.

Yet all is far from lost. Already Gorbachev's perestroika has been plagued by a rash of defensive strikes, not least last year's miners' strike. Gorbachev admits he fears them more than all the nationalist movements put together. And so he should. The Soviet working class, even at this eleventh hour, has the power to scupper his counterrevolutionary plans. The giant has stirred, now it must act.

The Editor



# Forging the weapon

**Lenin said, Marxism is powerful because it is true. In fighting to understand the truth at our Corfu school, we have developed our power.**

**T**HE bourgeoisie are busy burying communism ... again. This time round they have able and willing assistants in the shape of Gorbachev and the 'official communists'. Clever-clever media hacks are vying with each other to see who can tramp the dirt down on the grave of Marxism the hardest.

Politically, the disintegration of 'official communism' and the bureaucratic socialist states which have buttered its bread has led to a retreat for the world's working class. Much of the old from our class will be unable to cope with the changing world and will, to all intents and purposes, disappear. Who expects to see the Euro CPGB, CPB and NCP on the scene in another couple of years? Then there are the myriad Trotskyist groups, whose dream of a political revolution in Eastern Europe has turned into a nightmare.

Because we recognise this period as being in essence one of retreat, it does not mean that genuine communists are despairing. Quite the reverse. With the old in terminal decline, possibilities for the growth of the new, communist, forces will arise. Our method not only equips us with the answers in theory, but the basis for advance in fact.

Clarification is vital in this period, both nationally and internationally. To steel a cadre force for the coming battles we must be able to equip comrades with the method which will arm them effectively for those battles. Those without such a method, without the determination to translate it into action, will fall.

From May 5 to May 12, the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*) held a school in Corfu. Over forty comrades attended, including representatives of the Communist Party of Turkey, the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*), the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the Communist Labour Party of the United States of North America. We were particularly pleased to have the presence of two comrades from the Central Committee of the latter organisation, as we had not had the opportunity to meet the CLP before. To all organisations and comrades that contributed, we send our deepest thanks for their invaluable contributions.

The week was packed with free and frank discussion and debate between comrades from different organisations, with wide ranging contributions, theoretically and from their own practice nationally, to put into the school.

The school was not constructed on such lines as to indulge in mutual back-slapping on areas of agreement between our organisations, but so as to highlight and

clarify these differences, even if not resolve them within the space of one week's debate. This takes on great importance between communist organisations who have passed through very different roads of development in very varied national conditions, each with the potential to make a contribution to the reforging of a powerful international communist movement.

Working groups meet to discuss women's oppression, the party, the working class and revolution and counterrevolution, reporting back to the school as a whole. These, and the plenary sessions, always generated lively discussion. Questions of the methods of communist organisation and intervention, the current stage of capitalist development, the situations within comrades' respective countries and, of course, Gorbachevism provided much material and scope for exchanges.

Given the current world situation, it is natural that the latter question in particular should generate the most heated debate, which was drawn out in the school with the contributions from the comrades of ORWI, who we feel have a rather apologetic attitude to Gorbachevism. All had every opportunity to contribute, both from the platform and repeatedly from the floor throughout the week. Differences, whether fundamental or in terms of emphasis, were given every opportunity for expression, and led to the development of both clarity and depth as the week progressed.

To attempt a brief resume of contributions here would be to do them a grave injustice. In future issues of *The Leninist* we will be printing transcripts from some of the introductions and discussion.

Advances were unquestionably made. We do not have a 'checklist' approach to unity, where hands are raised in favour of the world revolution, democratic centralism, the dictatorship of the proletariat etc, etc... and 'unity' is shattered at the first serious test. That is no more than an opportunist non aggression pact.

Communist unity is only forged in struggle, both ideological and political. Our school was a battle of ideas for communists internationally, at a crucial turning point in world history. Because of this, it strengthened *real* communist unity.

We aim to consolidate and extend this. The situation today presents us with the opportunity to develop and extend Marxist theory, not in the sterile manner of a sect, but in practical struggle. For our organisation this means extending not only our theory, but, because this entails shouldering greater responsibility, the disci-

pline at all levels of our organisation and our practical ability to intervene and turn communist theory into effective and challenging practice.

The school was conceived to equip all our comrades with the ability to fill the role of leaders of our class. It is necessary to develop comrades at all level, to eradicate the vestiges of a 'leaders and led' mentality within the organisation. All communists should be leaders, and it is the duty of any communist organisation worthy of the name to undertake the creation of such a cadre.

Internationally, our tasks are to develop our links and common struggle as communists, particularly against the fifth column of Gorbachevism. Our comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey, in particular, are extending this aspect of their work, as it was announced in the school that the Party had established an international relations bureau to facilitate the cooperation and regroupment of genuine communist forces internationally.

The week's school, we feel, was an important step forward in this regroupment; one which is the only guarantee of the completion of the world revolution, won by a re-forged Communist International. That is still a long, hard road ahead of us. But it is one which has been embarked on through creating a forum for Leninists internationally, one which we hope to develop and extend next year.

Relative to what the enemy's camp can range against us, our forces may seem pitifully small. But all comrades came from the school with greater conviction in our ability and necessity to win. Our tasks today are massive, the enemy class numerically far stronger. Yet this is the situation in which revolutionaries found themselves in 1914, faced with the treachery of the Second International.

Faced with the treachery of the 'official communists' today, we have that experience of three quarters of a century ago to draw on, and the decades of struggle since. The struggles of seemingly irrelevant revolutionaries then could not be heard above the imperialist guns of World War I; yet it was these same revolutionaries who soon after drowned the guns with the thunder of the October Revolution, setting the world aflame. Our tasks today are the same, the stakes higher — but the potential is vast.

We believe the school proved to all comrades who attended that, for communists, theory and ideological struggle are no luxury but the furnace in which the weapon of world revolution is forged.

Alan Merrik

## IN STRUGGLE

**Hands Off Ireland!**, which was very active in the London Winchester Three Campaign, has released the following statement: "The unexpected freeing of the three, along with increasing pressure on the establishment from liberal critics concerning the Birmingham Six and now the Maguires and others, has a contradictory effect. It can strengthen false notions that essentially these false imprisonments were 'miscarriages' of an otherwise healthy system of justice. But also, among a small but significant minority these exposures can undermine faith in and even identification with the British state itself. Only if these doubts are politicised by winning workers to take sides in the Irish war against their own state, however, can they become a conscious stand in favour of Irish freedom. During our campaigning work in the Winchester Three Campaign controversy arose with some over this militant orientation of HOI!. Yet, as Martina Shanahan, one of the Winchester Three, pointed out, while Britain continues to occupy Ireland, there will be more Birmingham Sixes, more Guildford Fours, more Winchester Threes. HOI! is in business to draw these links, to win workers to fight for the freedom of all of Ireland's political prisoners — those like the three, victims of crude frameups, and those who are 'guilty' of fighting for the freedom of their country." MF

**The UWC's demonstration** against the poll tax in Brixton on June 9 (assemble 12.30pm St Matthews, Brixton Hill, SW2), provides the best possible opportunity for employed and unemployed workers to unite and march against the Tory tax. The UWC has always said that the poll tax is the greatest attack our class as a whole has had to face for years. So the whole class must be united in the fight back. With over 30% refusing to pay in Scotland, and with similar figures reported for England and Wales, confidence is continuing to build that the tax can be defeated. The UWC emphasises that workers should have no illusions in the Labour Party and its roof tax. "Every action must remain within the law" Labour continually bleats. Even if we are talking about the law slashing peoples' living standards! Labour cannot and should not be trusted to look after our interests. The UWC believes that this system has to provide and maintain a decent living standard for all workers, employed and unemployed, or if it cannot it must go. Join our demonstration and fight both the Tory attacks and Labour's complicity — unite for what we need, not what the system can afford. OH

**On April 30, striking nursery workers** from Hammersmith and Fulham council returned to work. They had been on strike for six months, fighting for a regrading claim. Despite voting to go back to work, they have refused to agree to the package that management imposed on the scabs who worked through the strike, a review of which has been agreed in the near future. By the end of the strike their fight was concerned more with protecting services and preventing cuts by the Labour council than about pay. Management saw the strike as a good opportunity to close some nurseries permanently. The workers, however, won a commitment from the council that *all* nurseries would open on their return to work. Although this dispute has not yet resulted in victory for these workers, there have been some very positive aspects. The fact that only a couple of the original strikers returned to work during the six months shows the unity, solidarity and determination that existed. However the failure of the rest of the Nalgo branch to take the decisive all out strike action that was needed to win the dispute led eventually to the return to work. The organisation, involvement and militancy of these women workers has set a fine example to the rest of the branch. Workers in this poll tax-capped council will face more bitter battles in the future. NS



■ March against the poll tax with the UWC

## Strength to strength



Almost simultaneously two publications from the opposite ends of the 'official communist' spectrum, *7 Days* and *World Marxist Review*, have, so to speak, gone west. Good riddance, we say. Neither played any positive role whatsoever in the struggle for communism, indeed both gave communism a bad name. In spite of past massive financial subsidies, such was the level of support these publications generated that they did not even bother to put out appeals for their readers to save them. What a contrast our paper makes. While there is no room for complacency our paper will not go down. From what we have received in the post since our last edition, £520, we know that readers of *The Leninist* feel an intense loyalty to their paper. That is why, where others go down, we go from strength to strength.



**Will the NCP soon go the same way as Dr David Owen's SDP? From the recent spate of Central Committee resignations and a one day 'ideological' conference, it looks like it**

**A**T LONG LAST it looks like the beginning of the end of the 'New' 'Communist' 'Party'. As the tragi-farcical collapse of bureaucratic socialism in Eastern Europe reaches its final stage, organisations like the NCP (the CPB and Euros in Britain) which have prostituted themselves one way or the other, ideologically or financially, to their corrupt bureaucratic leaderships, now find themselves facing liquidation.

No bad thing, we say. Such 'official communist' groups have always given real communism a bad name. Now, like their big brothers in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, they are being torn apart by historical forces which they are incapable of understanding. At the same time all the problems that they thought were banished by bureaucratic diktat reappear to hound them.

Under the impact of the burgeoning counterrevolution in what were the Eastern European socialist states, the NCP has just about summoned up the energy to divide into three broad trends.

- First, those who think Stalin and the Soviet Union under his leadership only made minor mistakes, those who want the NCP to maintain an ostrich like position on the last 50 years of world history. This is the Derby and Joan section. Politics for these types petrified decades ago. They literally are, like the bizarre celocanth dredged off the sea floor a number of years ago, living fossils.

- Second, the Gorbys fans who now hate Stalin and 'Stalinism'. These characters (like former 'Stalinist' NCP chair Martin Spellman) at least have the merit of being consistently inconsistent. They have applied the NCP's previous 'principled' position of uncritical support for everything that came out of the mouth of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the ultra revisionist Gorbachev also. Their 'consistency', however, is leading them, like Gorbachev, to counterrevolutionary conclusions.

- The third 'dominant' trend, is the broadest and most politically diffuse. It is essentially characterised by knowing what it does *not* want, rather than by any positive perspective. They reject Gorbachev. Yet they know that there can be no return to what was for them a 1950 'golden age'. As we will see there are all sorts of divisions within it.

### The Juche man

As the centrifugal liquidationist forces within 'official communism' gather pace, elements within this 'dominant' trend move further and further apart and deeper and deeper into crisis. We will briefly outline the state of organisational/political paralysis and disintegration that today characterises it and the NCP as a whole, before looking at the history of this particular sect.

Editorial control of the organisation's turgid central organ, *The New Worker*, has recently passed from one Jim Hillier to a newly appointed editorial board. And here is the reason why...

The 200 strong NCP survived, set up a commercial printing business, sustained its weekly 20p paper, its posse of 15 paid fulltimers and a large South London headquarters, not because of the hard work and self sacrifice of its membership. As a client party, a press agency, for the venal bureaucracies in the socialist countries, the NCP over the years has received many thousands of pounds from sources in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, etc. Dues for this flabby, Labourite-style organisation are set at a mere 50p per week for employed members! The whole edifice was in fact financed by the 'diplomatic inter-

# RIP, NCP



Political prostitutes: the NCP leaders go cap in hand to 'the great leader', Kim Il Sung

nationalist' gravy train.

Until quite recently, that is. Like its opportunist stable mate, the *Morning Star*, which had its Soviet subsidy slashed by half last year, *New Worker's* money has dried up.

Desperate to keep the coffers full, the staid and essentially apolitical NCP general secretary, Eric Trevett, began casting his hungry little eyes around the world. Surely someone, somewhere was in the market for a pliant and relatively cheap diplomatic arm in Britain? Surely he could sell the NCP to *someone*?

North Korea. A socialist state which had already approached the Communist Party of Britain to play the role of its British fan club, stepped in to play the role of Blackadder to the NCP's Baldrick. There was a price to pay, however (as it turned out, by the NCP only — old Kim Il Sung is far more wily a politician than Eric Trevett).

In April, an NCP delegation to North Korea including Trevett and the frankly off-beam Andy Brooks, came home full of praise for the achievements of socialism there and presented editor Jim Hillier with an article for *New Worker*: an uncritical and very 'official' view of the state of North Korean socialism. Even more cravenly, the piece actually praised the official state ideology, Juche.

Juche is idealist and nationalist. It has nothing to do with genuine Marxism. It combines a go it alone Korean 'road to communism' with a veneration of the person of Kim Il Sung which verges on religion. For example, Juche actually includes the 'principle' of dynastic rule! The Central Committee of the Korean Worker's Party is full of Kim Il Sung's relatives and after his death, the great leader's son will be given the same sort of semi-divine status accorded to the man himself! This, of course, has nothing to do with healthy socialism. It is though reminiscent of feudalistic ideas of the divine right of kings. It tells us everything about how imperialist-imposed isolation has further twisted the already backward and bureaucratic socialism in Democratic Korea.

Hillier, the editor of a paper which has never had the slightest trouble in printing any 'official' trash, was therefore given a typical

piece of NCP 'diplomatic internationalism' on Kim Il Sung, of which the following is an extract:

"The actions of such dedicated leaders encompasses all that is good in the hearts and aspirations of the people. In this sense the people and the leader are one ... The people of the country are proud of their collective endeavours but they do not feel it is a contradiction to attribute their success to Kim Il Sung, who they refer to as their great leader."

But Hillier, unlike all his many sorry predecessors, refused; indeed he offered his resignation, an incorrect response in our view, but understandable. The article eventually did appear on April 27, but with Hillier taking 'leave' to disassociate himself from it. In the spirit of openness that the NCP has made its own, naturally none of this was reported in *New Worker*, nor, for that matter, to rank and file NCP members (those interested in its internal developments will, as is usual, have to rely on *The Leninist*).

Nevertheless in spite of all the ructions we understand that Trevett's crawling has not generated much if anything in terms of funds. North Korea defaulted on all its foreign debts a few years ago and has not got too much in terms of the folding matter to flash around ... It seems the "fraternal relations" the NCP has established with the Workers Party of Korea will not be as lucrative as Trevett and others hoped for. Kim got what he wanted. Trevett got nothing.

As a result the NCP is more desperate than ever to hang onto the clients it still has. In *The New Worker* of May 11, a statement by the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is printed without comment. Surprising, considering that the same paper carried another uncritical half page report back on March 16 (under the editorship of Hillier) that Ethiopia no longer considered itself a "socialist state" and that the ruling Workers' Party of Ethiopia, had become the Democratic Unity Party, dropping Marxism-Leninism and instead embracing "all Ethiopians".

Unlike the NCP, we never painted the undeveloped capitalist Ethiopia as 'socialist', despite the frequent incantations of 'Marxism-

Leninism' made by the country's petty bourgeois leadership and their tactical alliance with the Soviet Union. Any doubts about this have, of course, now been removed by *New Worker* itself, and by Ethiopia's increasingly open alliance with Israel and Western imperialism. So the NCP is thus — according to its own reports — now printing (uncritically) the policy statements of an avowed bourgeois government in Addis Ababa, a government it is the task of revolutionaries in that country to overthrow, not support.

Like an aging gigolo whose charms are fading, the NCP leadership is obviously trying to sell its dubious services, to *anyone*. When will the NCP rank and file rebel? Is it even capable of it?

### Rebellion

Despite the increasingly pathetic and sickening examples of 'diplomatic internationalism' by its leadership, despite the effective collapse of its centrist world view, the membership of the NCP have remained breathtakingly passive. Even the most verbal, in their protestations against Gorbachevism have totally failed to develop any sort of serious critique of the political crisis of their organisation, or even to link their specific criticisms of the NCP to the worldwide collapse of 'official communism'.

Because of this the NCP leadership has responded to the deep crisis that now grips it in a typically half hearted, typically inadequate and typically centrist fashion. It has called a *one day ideological conference* on June 23 in London. This meeting is, in essence, a sop to critics, not a honest communist attempt to come to grips with changes in the world. As evidenced by its history, the leadership of the NCP has a dread fear of genuine debate, which by definition for communists should be continuous, not once every thirteen years.

The significance that 'critical NCP elements' have attached to this one day conference is really quite stupid. The idea that the political/ideological problems of the NCP — problems rooted in the organisation's foundation, in its practice since its foundation, in its very world view since its foundation — would be resolved in a single day, in six hours, was ludicrous. To suggest otherwise was always politically naive in the extreme.

We made our views on this question known to three of these NCP Central Committee 'critical elements' who turned up to one of our Central London seminars a couple of months ago. We urged them to drop the illusion that the NCP could ever be changed into any sort of genuine revolutionary organisation. Risk expulsion by honestly and openly developing your views within the NCP, use your 'ideological conference' to fight, win as many adherents as possible, we told them. The perspective they voiced of capturing the soul of the NCP at a one day 'ideological' conference was, we said, a perspective doomed to demoralisation and defeat.

And we have been proved right. In recent weeks, a spate of Central Committee resignations have hit the organisation. Jim Hillier, *The New Worker's* editor, has resigned (and was last seen heading for sunny Spain) as have Jon Kaufman and Paul Clarke, as well as other associated lower level members of NCP and its youth organisation ... that is, the very elements who thought they could change the NCP at a one day ideological conference. They have walked out even before it. In doing so the hopelessness of reforming the NCP is proved.

In effect, Eric 'the Juche man' Trevett, has been handed victory on a plate. Trevett will now have the tame talking shop he wanted. More importantly, the potential for a coherent left challenge to his leadership has been removed by such spirited desertion.

Jon Kaufman wrote in the 'Ideological Conference Discussion' paper No1 that "the NCP, if it wishes to recall its brief history, has seen a relatively sizable number of young communists come into its ranks and an equally sizable number either leave or be expelled ... Today, we have a new group of young comrades. Will they go the same way as earlier recruits?"

Well yup, 'fraid so, Jon, as you yourself have shown by your own action: The NCP is organically incapable of self reform. It, like all other organisations of 'official communism' objectively represents a *block* on the road to developing a genuine Communist Party in this country. A problem against which Leninists are duty bound to wage an ideological war of extermination.



## History

In spite of the recent batch of desertions, divisions will continue to plague the sorry wreck of the NCP. Any nods the leadership makes in the direction of tactics or debate will simply exacerbate the crisis of organisation. Trevett, intent as he is to save the 'party' on any ideological basis whatsoever, will constantly run up against others with their own particular 'survival projects'.

Already the organisation's National Organiser, George Davis, has made it known that he stands very close to the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain. He does not want to play 'communist unity' as a recruiting tactic any longer. He wants the real thing: a quick fusion with the CPB. In order to facilitate the shotgun marriage, he and his kind are willing to overlook the 'detail' that the NCP split from the CPGB in 1977 on the basis of opposition to its programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, while the CPB split from the CPGB in 1988, on the basis of defending it (still, what's a programme matter between opportunists?).

Trevett, on the other hand, is opposed to making a compromise on this question. He wants to attract aged CPBers, and their money, by being seen as 'hard', 'hard' in what he's forgotten, but again what does that matter for a congenial opportunist.

This type of quibble over 'details' among opportunists of various hues are not the stuff of Leninist politics. The NCP has only had significance for us to the extent that it was an expression of the dominant tendency in the 'official' world communist movement - centrism. Today, that form of opportunism is on its last legs.

The attempt to reform the NCP always was a hopeless project. The organisation never had the potential to be a healthy Marxist-Len-

inist group, as evidenced by its shabby history.

The decision to split from the CPGB and form the NCP in July 1977 was hurried, taken for purely organisational, not political, reasons. Sid French (secretary) and Eric Trevett (organiser) were panicked into a split by threats to investigate their factional activity and to 'reorganise' their Surrey district power base. There were no pamphlets, no unofficial papers, no honest polemical articles in the party press - in other words, nothing resembling a principled ideological struggle.

Despite leftist positions adopted in the immediate aftermath of the split, the new organisation was always crippled by its congenital centrism. By late 1979 it had retreated from any commitment to building a revolutionary party - a project that would have inevitably involved offending those who wanted to use the NCP in order to retire from active politics. Instead, the NCP decided against demanding any discipline or commitment from its membership, to prioritise diplomatic internationalism and constitute itself a spineless tail of the official labour movement in Britain. Its fate was sealed.

Internal debate and discussion was banned. Left critics, like former National Organiser John Chamberlain, were expelled. This put the centrist NCP on a rightist trajectory. It developed a shameful sideline in promoting the witchhunts of the Trotskyites and other leftists in the trade union movement, CND and Labour Party, for example lining up with the openly pro-imperialist right wing to demand "urgent measures" to "remove Militant's leaders" (*The New Worker*, September 24, 1982). Now it happily supports the Labour Party's proposed roof tax, refuses to even call upon its Central Committee members not to pay the poll tax, and wants to affiliate to Kinnock's party as a loyal component.

## Mealy mouths

In his 'keynote' address to the NCP's congress last year, an august body of some forty delegates, the clown prince himself, Trevett, uttered these immortal words in reference to events in the USSR: "Frankly, we can no longer be mealy-mouthed." (*The New Worker*, December 11, 1989). He went on to denounce the Soviet line on a number of issues as "revisionist", then, in true mealy-mouthed centrist fashion to state that the NCP would "continue to give critical support to perestroika". That is, support to counterrevolutionary revisionism.

Those in the NCP who have a real commitment to fighting for the British proletarian revolution should have no truck with Trevett's hypocrisy. You must resolutely face the fact of counterrevolution in the socialist countries and you must explain it. You must, in other words, take to heart one of Lenin's favourite phrases - *to say what is*.

But will it be? Because this is a period of reaction, among the 'critical elements' in the NCP there seems to be a retreat from serious politics. We hope to overcome this. Nonetheless there is a tendency to back away from the hard conclusions we reach, in theory let alone practice. As can easily be seen, this yellowness, in reality, is a continuation of the methodology of the centrist NCP.

In the past, saying what was, honestly identifying the problems facing the 'official' world communist movement and the socialist countries was denounced as rank heresy by such comrades. It was "anti-Soviet", they told us Leninists; it was a "surrender to bourgeois ideas" because this was what the Euros did.

Of course, this always missed the point. The Euros, like all bourgeois enemies of communism, proceed from certain realities to per-

vert them for their own ends. That is their prerogative. That, indeed, is the class struggle. But now, we are vindicated. The problems we pointed to really were there: and today they have all but destroyed living socialism in Eastern Europe and threaten to do the same in the USSR, the world's revolutionary centre itself.

But the type of exchanges we Leninists once had with such centrist comrades (when they dared cross swords with us), highlighted the differing approaches of centrist opportunism and Leninism. They used to deny the existence of the problems outright by denouncing reality as "anti-Soviet". *The Leninist*, on the other hand, always saw the problems that the class enemy saw, preferably before it saw it, and attacked the problems in a revolutionary, proletarian fashion. This is the distinction between the *surrender to the politics of expediency*, ie, opportunism, and hard, Leninist principles.

Those real comrades who have left the NCP, those communists still trapped in this disintegrating anti-Leninist, 'critically' pro-perestroika clot, must break from its cowardly, opportunist methodology, before it's too late.

Comrades, it gives us no pleasure to have been proved right on the dangers facing the socialist countries. We are not pleased by the fact that our warnings on the fate on the 'official' world communist movement have come frighteningly true. But right we were.

Now we urge comrades in or around the NCP to face up to the politics of Leninism. Otherwise you only face defeat and demoralisation. Our politics have enabled us to say what was, what is and, crucially, what must be. This is the unshakeable basis for our Leninist revolutionary optimism as we face up to the tasks of the British proletarian revolution.

Ian Mahoney

# 'Discussion document'

The New Communist Party will be holding a six hour ideological conference on June 23 in London for its members and "invited guests". Its central committee has issued a document and invited contributions to the "discussion". Here is our response

THE NCP's discussion document (printed in the *New Worker*, March 16) consists almost entirely of questions, 39 in all. In spite of this veritable mass of questions, written contributions from below are limited to just 1,200 words per person, or 32.5 words per question. The reason for such farcically limited democratic debate is simple. The leadership hopes to avoid a well informed discussion and therefore firm conclusions and sharp differences. That is the only device such opportunists can come up with to prevent organisational disintegration. It won't work. Indeed there is every chance that such a dishonest approach will merely speed up what is inevitable.

The discussion document has no conclusions, only questions which tie the NCP leadership to nothing, (not surprising for a 'party' which as a matter of principle refuses to produce a programme). We will deal with each set of questions one by one.

•Class. Obviously the working class and the "dynamism of class struggle" remains "central to historical development". The real question the NCP ought to ask, but dares not, is why non-class, revisionist ideas which suggest otherwise are flooding out of Novosti and other official Soviet publishing houses. It can't just be because Gorbachev replaced Chernenko as general secretary of the CPSU. Clearly such ideas have historical roots in the CPSU's theory going back many decades, not least Stalin's notion that all class contradictions in the USSR had been ended by the mid-1930s.

•New thinking. Yes, so-called, "new thinking" is "revisionism", not a "leap forward". It

is the logical conclusion of the idea that socialism in the USSR could develop without any outside assistance, first advanced by Stalin in 1924, and the later elevation of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems from what was a tactic to a principle - an idea which the NCP has advocated, defended and even expelled members for questioning.

•Revolution. "What is revolution?" the NCP asks. What do we mean by "working class state power" and "what is the role of parliament?" it continues. Either the NCP leadership considers its rank and file idiots or the NCP leadership, itself, consists of idiots. After 13 years of existence, the fact that the NCP has to ask itself such questions shows the depth of the problem. Revolution is the violent overthrow of the reactionary state by the progressive forces - in the epoch of imperialism, the working class and its allies. Parliament is a reactionary institution which will be swept aside by the working class along with other lumber of the bourgeois state.

Our epoch is the epoch of the transition from capitalism to communism via proletarian revolutions, an epoch of wars and revolutions. With the advent of imperialism, the world as a whole became ripe for the establishment of socialism. Thus for Leninists every question of the day, every problem the class struggle throws up, becomes at the same time a problem that can only be resolved positively through revolution.

•Democracy. The NCP asks us: "What is socialist democracy" and "what are its forms". It also asks how "corruption and abuses of power" can be prevented? The NCP

has only ever paid lip service to socialist democracy. It excused every example of "corruption and abuse of power" in what were the socialist countries, and denied that there were any problems.

Obviously socialism can take many forms. But socialist democracy can only take one form, a soviet form, which is mass, participative, direct and open. The working class will not - and cannot, in any real direct sense - rule using a parliament. It can only rule effectively and directly through soviet type bodies, where delegates are elected, subject to instant recall, and full time officials receive only the wage of the average worker. That curbs corruption and abuse of power. It is also the best form to facilitate the transition to communism, where the working class 'semi state' and its socialist democracy will finally wither away and give way to general freedom.

•The Party. "Are there ways of improving the practice of democratic centralism" in the NCP? If it existed, of course. But it does not. What the NCP calls democratic centralism is in reality bureaucratic centralism. There is no genuine democracy in the NCP, no chance for minority views to become majority views, no culture of open debate and ideological struggle. Minorities are forced to keep quiet or face expulsion. That is the history of the NCP.

Democratic centralism can only be genuine if it is based on unity around the communist programme. The NCP, however, is bureaucratically united around opportunism, not Marxism-Leninism. Whatever it says about revolution, no one can deny that the NCP operates in a reformist, social democratic way. Its practice, the little there is of it, is characterised by an abject tailing of left bourgeois politics in the form of the British Labour Party, a bourgeois workers' party (Lenin), and the official trade union movement bureaucracy.

If, like the NCP, you split the idea of the revolution from day to day struggles, you feel no imperative to build a Bolshevik type organisation. Left reformist politics lead to lazy, inefficient, undynamic left reformist swamps.

If anyone needs proof of the fact that the NCP is a centrist rump they need only look at the practice of the organisation ... if they can find any to look at. Can anyone actually re-

member an original, independent campaigning initiative to have come from the NCP leadership - ever?

•World socialism. Has there been a "fundamental shift in the balance of forces between socialism and capitalism" in 1990? Well, according to the NCP's doctrine, the balance of forces decisively shifted in favour of socialism in 1960. As we have consistently argued, it never did. Certainly now the world balance has temporarily shifted further in favour of imperialism. This can only heighten the prospect of war. Only new socialist revolutions can change that.

But the NCP has been organised for the purposes of diplomatic internationalism, not proletarian revolution. It has only been kept ticking over by injections of money from corrupt bureaucracies in Eastern Europe, which have now collapsed. Along with them, the NCP's world view has also collapsed. Now it openly serves the reactionary and openly bourgeois regime of Mengistu in Ethiopia (not that different from the WRP (*News Line*) and Iran). Healthy elements in the NCP must rebel and address themselves to the challenge of the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

•Peace. The NCP wants to know whether or not it should now "demand" that Britain "get out of Nato". That it did not before now says it all about the NCP, an organisation which expelled leading members who dared to say: "If you want peace, fight the bosses!"

•Nationalism. Nationalism continues to be such a power in Eastern Europe not least because of the bureaucratic crimes of 'official communism', crimes which the NCP still has not really admitted, let alone fully analysed.

•The market, socialism and capitalism. The market and the law of value can play a role under socialism, but it should be a role that slowly gives way to the law of planning. But what Gorbachev and his call for a "regulated market economy" amounts to is a programme for capitalist restorationism.

Yet the NCP still insists on giving "critical support" to perestroika. The task of real communists is to fight for the overthrow Gorbachev, not give him critical support.





70 YEARS

# Our history

## The formation of the CPGB and its early years: articles, documents and manifestos



Arthur McManus and Tom Bell: fought for unity around the principles of the early Comintern

The Revolutionary Communist Party showed its normal grasp of proletarian internationalism in reporting May Day. Heroic demonstrations, in which many fine comrades were killed by the enemy were dismissed with a wave of the hand. The London demonstration was chauvinistically written off as comprising of 'a few Turkish Stalinists' [sic] with 'an almost mystical attachment to May Day'. Quite what is 'mystical' about the millions of workers in Turkey that mobilised against the state on May 1 during the '70s, the communists who risked their lives commemorating it under fascism, those who risked attack on the demonstration last year in which one worker was shot dead by police and the 1,500 revolutionaries who were arrested before the illegal May Day demonstration in Istanbul this year is beyond this scribe. But then, perhaps such contempt for international workers day is all one can expect from this Little England student sect.

In early May, the secretary of Sheffield University Students Union, Helen Pitts, got carded up to the Socialist Workers Party. Darts, the independent SUS paper, reports that this contradicts the SWP policy of not standing for office. An SWP spokesperson showed a masterful grasp of SWP tactics when he explained what might appear to a less principled and mercurial brain slightly unprincipled: "The only reason we had this policy is because we never thought anyone would get elected." This cowardly attitude is just the pits - the Helen Pitts.

Those self proclaimed collaborators of ours on the Labour left, the Workers Power Group, recently turned up to a Tooting Anti-Poll Tax Union specifically to oppose the Unemployed Workers Charter demonstration against the poll tax in Brixton on June 9, on the grounds that the UWC has done 'nothing' on the issue, merely being a front for The Leninist which was trying to grab a slice of the action. Obviously, for this topsy turvey group - which believes in counterrevolutionary revolutions and revolutionary counterrevolutions - organising demonstrations is an example of 'nothing'. Presumably that is why Workers Power assured Hands Off Ireland! that they would not 'actively oppose' its commemoration of the 1916 rising in Dublin - and turned out exactly no one to it.

IN THE aftermath of the formation of the Third (Communist) International in March 1919 the first serious attempts were made to weld Britain's divided revolutionary forces into a strong, united Communist Party. The first unity meeting between the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the Workers Socialist Federation and the South Wales Socialist Society was held in London on May 13 1919. As the following report from the BSP's *The Call* shows, it proved to be a difficult meeting.

### Socialist Unity

So far as fundamental principles and the general basis upon which it was suggested the four organisations could unite in a new party are concerned, the discussion showed that there was little disagreement. The main difficulty arose, as anticipated, on the question of tactics, particularly in regard to relations with the Labour Party and the existing industrial organisations. There was, on the part of the WSF, a tendency displayed against any participation whatever in Parliamentary action, although the representatives of that body said that their views regarding Parliamentary action would not be allowed to stand in the way of the formation of a united party. The chief division of opinion arose respecting the relations of the proposed new party to the Labour Party. On behalf of the BSP reference was made to the referendum of the BSP membership taken last year, when a proposal to withdraw from the Labour Party was defeated by a majority of four to one, and to the vote of the Easter Conference of the Party, when the policy of Labour Party affiliation was reaffirmed by an overwhelming majority. The BSP members stated that they felt that the bulk of the BSP membership would make it conditional upon any steps in the direction of unity that the basis of amalgamation should include the affiliation of the new organisation to the Labour Party.

Against this the comrades from the other bodies argued that however much they, as individuals, might be prepared to make the concessions in order to achieve

unity, it would be quite useless for them to approach their members with any proposal for unity that made affiliation to the Labour Party one of the bases of amalgamation.

Subsequently a further proposal was made as suggesting a middle course to which all might agree. That proposal was that the membership of the several Parties should be consulted as to their willingness to merge their respective bodies in a new party, and that the question of affiliation to the Labour Party should be settled by a referendum of the members of the new party three months after its formation. The representatives of the SLP, in support of this proposal, said that whilst they considered it futile to approach their members with a proposal that included immediate affiliation to the Labour Party, their members would, in the event of unity being achieved, and a referendum of the new party of affiliation to the Labour Party, abide loyally by that decision however much they might disagree with it. Eventually it was agreed that those present should submit the proposal to their respective Executives in the following form:

"That the membership of the various organisations be consulted as to their willingness to merge the existing organisations into a united Party having for its object the establishment of Communism by means of the dictatorship of the working class through Soviets; and that the question of the affiliation of the new Party to the Labour Party be decided by a referendum of the members three months after the new Party is formed."

This proposal was in due course remitted to the BSP Executive, when the action taken by the BSP members at the meeting was endorsed and the proposal adopted.

*The Call*, No 176, August 21 1919

The BSP carried out two branch ballots in early 1920, the first on affiliation to the Communist International was carried by 98 branches to 4, the other, on revolutionary unification in a Communist Party, was also carried by an overwhelming majority. However things were more complicated in the other organisations. The

SLP leadership sought to deliberately confuse the issue of communist unity by making it conditional on no affiliation to the Labour Party. So while the SLP membership voted by a large majority for a merger, predictably they also voted by a large majority against any affiliation to the Labour Party.

The dogmatic wing of the SLP leadership only wanted unity with the BSP on their own terms. They had also come to mistrust their own team responsible for unity negotiations, Tom Bell, Arthur MacManus and William Paul; who although themselves opposed to affiliation, put the formation of the CPGB above such tactical differences. Because of this the SLP leadership by a narrow majority voted not only to break off negotiations, but to dissolve its own Unity Committee.

The WSF referendum (given its leftist politics) also produced a contradictory result; for unity, but against unity if it meant parliamentary action and Labour Party affiliation - the SWSS was so weak that it could not hold any sort of ballot, by early 1920 it had by all intents and purposes ceased to exist.

As a result the two meetings of the Unity Committee in January both ended in deadlock. As can be seen in the following report in its paper, *The Socialist*, the return of the SLP to negotiations, in March, only compounded the impasse.

### Unity Conference

Report of Unity Conference held in Miles Restaurant, Charing Cross, London, on March 13th 1920.

F Peet, acting secretary for the BSP, was appointed chairman, explained the reasons for the adjournment of the Conference of January 24th, 1920, and read the following statement from the BSP Executive:

"The matter of the Unity negotiations was again under the consideration of the BSP Executive at their meeting held in London on February 14th, when our delegates reported on the proceedings of the previous Conference. The Executive Committee of the BSP adhere to the views their delegates have expressed as to the relations of the Communist Party to the Labour Party and the industrial organisations of the working class. Nevertheless, they feel that this question, important though it is, is secondary to the need for uniting in one Communist Party all those organisations in this country that adhere to the Third International and accept the Soviet system and the Dictatorship of the Working Class. For this reason they are prepared to make a further concession in order to carry the negotiations with the other bodies to a successful issue, and have instructed me to express their willingness to withdraw that clause in the original Unity recommendations referring to a referendum three months after

the formation of the Communist Party on the question of its relations with the Labour Party ..."

Hodgson asked the SLP for their opinion of this proposal, but Mitchell (SLP) replied that as the SLP were not present at the two previous Conferences (January 9th and 24th) they preferred to hear the opinions of the other societies represented. S Pankhurst (WSF) stated that the proposal seemed unsatisfactory ... as soon as the new Party was formed the contest regarding affiliation to the Labour Party would begin, and a split would probably result ... The WSF considered that it should be laid down from the start that there should be no affiliation to the Labour Party. She then proceeded to read the resolution dealing with this point passed by the meeting of the Third International held at Amsterdam [this was the Western European Committee headed by Dutch 'left' communists which was closed on order of the Executive Committee in May 1920 - Ed], and stated that the WSF held the same views. N Edwards (SWSS) expressed himself in a somewhat similar manner. At this juncture Hodgson (BSP) made the statement that he entirely repudiated the Amsterdam meeting [which he had attended - Ed] as only a few organisations were represented there. F Willis (BSP) claimed that were the BSP to definitely withdraw from the Labour Party the work of years would be lost, as on many local Labour Parties there was a decided rebel element, and on others, again, they found that the Revolutionaries had already captured and gained complete control of these local Labour Parties ... Mitchell (SLP) stated, in reply, that the mandate of the SLP members was most emphatic in its opposition to affiliation to the Labour Party, and could never agree to sink the identity of the Revolutionary movement in any compromise with Social-Patriots such as the Labour Party. On this point the SLP could concede nothing, as a new party formed on such loose lines as indicated by the BSP would undoubtedly result in an immediate split ... All bodies affiliated, whether locally or nationally, to the Labour Party were responsible for the crimes the Labour Party had perpetuated against the workers, and the SLP realised that the Labour Party was as great an enemy to the working class, if not greater, than the capitalists themselves. Until such time as the question of the Labour Party was settled there could be no Unity ...

Hodgson (BSP) put the following question to the SLP: "If the BSP were to waive the question of Labour Party affiliation, would this satisfy the SLP, and were there any other obstacles to Unity?"

Mitchell (SLP), in reply, stated: "... They (the BSP) must be able to show that there was a distinct swing against affiliation to the Labour Party, and that there was an overwhelming majority against affiliation to the Labour Party. Two or more Executives agreeing to shut their eyes to existing differences did not by any manner of reasoning prove that the differences did not exist or make the antagonism any the less real."

After some discussion on the question of what would be the attitude of the new Party on Parliamentary action and the industrial organisations, without any decision having been arrived at on these questions, it was moved by F Peet (BSP) that the delegates report back to their several organisations. This being seconded by the SWSS, the Conference adjourned.

Thos Mitchell, Nat Sec.  
*The Socialist*, March 25 1920.



## Cultural Revolution

**Lynn Mally**, *Culture of the future: the Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia*, University of California 1990, hbk, pp306.

IN MID-OCTOBER 1917, 200 prominent intellectuals and worker-intellectuals got together in Petrograd to form the Proletarian cultural-educational organisations (or Proletcult for short). It was intended to be a sort of revolutionary cultural opposition to Kerensky's miserable 'Bennite' Right Socialist Revolutionary/Menshevik Provisional Government.

However, just one week later the Bolshevik led insurrection produced the world's first sustained proletarian dictatorship. It – not Proletcult's cultural opposition – initiated the explosion in proletarian artistic activity and interest these comrades earnestly wanted and strived for. Nevertheless it must be said that Proletcult did more than mirror the Bolshevik cultural revolution. It took an active lead and at its peak, in 1920, claimed 400,000 'proletarian' affiliates. As Mally shows, Proletcult did much fine work in educating and inspiring the proletariat in the Bolshevik spirit and encouraging its creativity during the heady years of War Communism.

Yet, in spite of this, for most communists today Proletcult conjures up the instant image of cultural nihilism – the idea that socialist culture could only grow on the basis of the ruins of the old culture: "In the name of our tomorrows we will burn the Raphaels, destroy the museums and trample on the flowers of art", as Proletcult member Kirillov put it in his famous poem, *We*.

Such an attitude was, in fact, not typical of Proletcult as a whole. It was far more of an umbrella organisation of workers' clubs, as well as numerous artistic trends. For most of its hundreds of local groups, Proletcult served only as a source for funding; few thought themselves bound by, indeed many were not even aware of, the rather bombastic aesthetic manifestos that came from the central leadership.

Nonetheless its very eclecticism, its claims to equality (even superiority) to the Soviet government and the financial exigencies of the post-civil war period brought Proletcult into conflict with the Party leadership: Lenin branded them "hairbrained", Trotsky too felt compelled to let off more than one elegant polemical broadside.

As a result, in December 1920 Proletcult lost its much valued autonomy and was submerged into Narkompros – the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment headed by Lunacharsky. Lunacharsky, not surprisingly, was extremely sympathetic to Proletcult (he did, after all, help to found it). In spite of this, though, it quickly declined and lost influence.

In part this was simply due to its bureaucratic subordination to Narkompros. But the bleak years of pro-market NEP retreat were hardly conducive to the fiery revolutionary romanticism of Proletcult. Indeed, after a long decline throughout the mid 1920s, albeit with a brief revival with the launch of the first five year plan in 1928, it was finally closed down in 1932 by Stalin, who was determined to impose a monolithic bureaucratic 'Socialist Realist' – in form pre-bourgeois – culture on Soviet

society.

'Official communist' and bourgeois 'historians' alike dismiss the movement out of hand as anti-communist. The presence of AA Bogdanov on its leadership seems to be enough for them both (Lenin's right hand man in the revolution of 1905, Bogdanov was expelled from the Bolshevik faction in 1908 – along with Lunacharsky – because of his 'god building' philosophical views and liquidationism ... but unlike many so-called 'left' Bolsheviks, he never rejoined the Party). Yet although he was its main theoretician, by 1920 he was the only non-Bolshevik on the leadership, and in 1921 he was not even re-elected to the governing board. Proletcult – from leadership to rank and file – was in fact thoroughly Bolshevik.

As a Bolshevik institution Proletcult had many undeniable achievements to its name. An overwhelmingly youthful organisation – even by 1925 65% of its membership was under nineteen – it initiated what became a popular mass culture, numerous workers' theatres as well as countless village clubs and factory choirs. As well as the mass it also actively involved artists of the highest calibre, who did great service to the proletarian regime, not least Eisenstein and Mayakovsky.

Yet Proletcult was not overconcerned with 'big names'. Its central aim was to break down the traditional barriers between the masses and the cultured elite. To a certain extent it actually achieved this laudable aim in practice. Many future leading figures in film, theatre, painting and music in the USSR had humble origins and gained their first experiences within Proletcult's studios. Given the extreme economic backwardness of Russia, this was a not inconsiderable achievement, indeed it surely has valuable lessons for socialist Britain.

Criticism of Proletcult is, of course, legitimate. Dismissal of it, however, is another thing entirely. While we Leninists quite rightly put our emphasis on the need for the proletariat to lay hold of existing bourgeois culture under capitalism and early socialism, there can be no denying the necessity of proletarian creativity in the task of laying the basis for the communist culture of the future. Long live Communism!

Hannah Leigh

## Collaboration

**Neil Malcolm**, *Soviet Policy Perspectives on Western Europe*, Routledge, 1989, pp118.

HERE is a book which outlines, in general, Soviet foreign policy as regards Western Europe and in particular its qualitative development since 1985, the year (not coincidentally) that Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

The author of this book is a principle lecturer in Russian and Soviet studies, ie, a Sovietologist, and as usual with these people, he is no friend of the working class. In this book he argues that "the new thinking in Soviet policy is founded on a sober appreciation of the underlying cohesiveness and adaptability of the west and on a determination to work with, rather than against, tendencies to integration."

In other words, he recognises that the Soviet leadership is collaborating with the bourgeoisie in order to create a 'common European home' where capitalism has

swallowed socialism whole. Of course this is already happening – only a fool can doubt it – but whereas, for communists, this is due to one of the greatest crimes of opportunism that has ever been committed, for Malcolm – like the bourgeoisie – this is a wonderful development. Summed up, it is the bourgeois dream come true.

The introduction treats us to a quote from Mikhail Gorbachev (from *Pravda* October 2, 1985) in which he says that the Soviet Union is preparing to work towards "overcoming Europe's divisions into opposing groups in a more of less foreseeable future". Fine words indeed, but in what direction was this to proceed?

We know that Europe was divided into 'opposing groups', that of capitalism and socialism, and to end this division is the main task of the proletariat. To overcome these divisions on the terms of the proletariat is to fight for socialist revolution in the capitalist countries and for political revolution in the socialist countries. In a nutshell, for one Europe – a socialist Europe – as an integral part of the world revolution. That is ABC Marxism-Leninism, but after five years of Gorbachevism, what do we see? Clearly Gorbachev's road to his beloved 'common European home' has been a road strewn with counterrevolutions, anti-communist demagoguery, and a sellout of basic principles on every question to the world bourgeoisie.

The socialist mask has now been torn off the 'new thinking' in Soviet foreign policy, it has resulted in nothing less than the restoration of capitalism in the Eastern European countries of the Warsaw Treaty organisation.

As the bourgeois leaders of former socialist countries such as Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia are welcomed with open arms in the Kremlin, the internationalist aid to the non-European socialist countries and national liberation movements is drastically reduced. This is the realisation of Gorbachev's 'new thinking'.

The 'new thinking' of the CPSU, to which the April 1985 Central Committee meeting gave birth, has shown itself to be nothing but old thinking, ie, social democracy. This has had its effects throughout the world, but notably in Eastern Europe. The Parties in Hungary and Poland willingly became social democratic and are now helping to sell their countries to the highest (capitalist) bidder.

The Soviet Union's economic ties with the other CMEA countries are moving away from a trade bloc based on mutual trade and the barter system, the strong helping the weak. CMEA trade relations are fast becoming based on hard currency deals, uneven bilateral trade, adaption to the free market. The doors of these countries are now being opened to foreign capital. The world bourgeoisie has found a new source of raw materials and cheap labour, a new market for goods.

Of course, as Lenin stated, foreign policy is essentially an extension of domestic policy, and we can see the results of that 'great statesman' Gorbachev's domestic policy today with the acceleration of capitalist restoration with the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Although this book is written as a paper for the Royal Institute of International Affairs and does not make gripping reading, it is nonetheless an honest exposé of present day Soviet foreign policy. Basing itself on articles from the Soviet press and leadership statements, it thoroughly exposes the theory and practice of modern opportunism – Gorbachevism.

Michael Waters

## The Leninist

**London Seminars:** 5pm Sundays. Details 01-431 3135. Series on the CPGB: From right centrism to Eurocommunism (continued):

**June 10:** The British Road to Socialism.

**June 17:** The impact of the 1956 events in Hungary.

**June 24:** Seventh Summer Offensive: first progress meeting.

**July 1:** The impact of the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia.

**July 8:** Seventh Summer Offensive: second progress meeting.

Series on the CPGB: Euro and anti-Euro opposition:

**July 15:** The debate around the 1977 Draft BRS.

**July 22:** The formation of the NCP and the crisis of the centrist opposition.

**July 29:** End of Summer Offensive meeting: 70th anniversary of the foundation of the CPGB.

**August 5:** The launch and development of *The Leninist*.

**August 12:** The significance of the Fourth Conference.

## Hands Off Ireland!

**London activists' meetings:** Central London, 7.30pm every Thursday: Phone 01-431 3135 for details.

## Workers Theatre Movement

**WTM club The Internationale:**

**Sunday June 10:** Dance, theatre, music etc 7.30pm Castlehaven Community Centre, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1.

**Wednesday July 4:** Celebrate American revolutions and American revolutionaries, 7.30pm Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1. Late bar, food. Admission £3, unwaged £2. Music, dance, theatre, including a WTM performance of *Waiting for Lefty*.

**Rehearsals:** Every Sunday in London. Phone Lisa on 01-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

## Unemployed Workers Charter

**London activist meetings:** Every Monday 8pm South London. For details ring 01-431 3135.

**Anti-poll tax actions:**

**Sat June 9:** UWC March against the Poll Tax. Assemble 12.30pm St Matthews, Brixton Hill, SW2.

**UWC streetwork:** Collection sheet to sponsor unemployed marchers on the Glasgow to London anti-poll tax march, September/October 1990.

**UWC Petition** against ET, YTS and the "actively seeking work" clause. Collect signatures and cash for the UWC. Send SAE for 6 petition sheets. UWC needs £500 per week!

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## Hands Off Ireland! takes to the streets

**HOI! aims to make the anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising a focal point for activity and orientation towards the working class in Britain**



**O**N APRIL 21 1990 Hands Off Ireland! held its first commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising in London. The march left Islington Town Hall for a rally at Caxton House with 200 marchers, led by the Hands Off Ireland! banner. We kept up a militant barrage of slogans expressing support for Irish POWs, for the IRA and Inla and for the smashing of the PTA and British imperialist rule in Ireland. The march attracted much attention en route, some joining the march while others expressed solidarity as it passed by.

The rally at Caxton House which followed the march had a broad platform with speakers from sponsoring organisations and individuals including Susanne Murphy from the Irish Republican Socialist Party, Dave Douglass (branch secretary, Hatfield Main NUM, personal capacity), Sean Waterman from the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign and David Rhys for HOI!. All speakers stressed the links between the struggle for Irish liberation and the liberation of workers in Britain.

For HOI! the march was a way of drawing out the significance of the Irish war for workers in Britain today. Despite the heroism of the last twenty years of the nationalist people in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland the British State has been able to successfully criminalise this struggle in the eyes of the working class in Britain. Successive Labour and Tory governments have utilised the law to bring

in ever more repressive means in an attempt to crush the revolutionary resistance of the IRA and Inla and any sympathetic response in Britain. The British State has literally been able to get away with murder because the working class in Britain has not taken the side of those fighting against British imperialism in Ireland.

HOI! activists took their propaganda into the organised trade union movement and were successful in getting motions of support passed in several trade union branches including Hammersmith Nalco, Hackney NUT, Westminster CPSA and Brent Nalco. Other sponsors included the Irish in Britain Representation Group, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, John Mitchell (ex-Idatu general secretary), Dr. Moire O'Shea, the Manchester Martyrs Commemoration Committee, the Irish Freedom Movement, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, the Revolutionary Communist Group and Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*).

Hands Off Ireland! aims to make the 1916 Easter Rising a focal point for our activity and orientation towards the working class in Britain. While other organisations are turning away from action and are trying to pressurise the British state to 'solve' the Irish war, HOI! pledges to stand firm on our two basic slogans: Troops Out Now! and Self Determination for the Irish Nation!

Sian Bond

**M**AY DAY displays all the strengths and weaknesses of the different strands in the workers' movement. It is therefore the perfect opportunity for the CPGB (*The Leninist*) to show its strength. And show it we did. In spite of the fact that we had a smaller contingent than we should have had because lack of serious contact work, we were still easily the largest British contingent on the march.

Once again, the organisers, South East Region TUC, had shown its extreme reluctance to build for the demonstration and ridiculously announced that assembly was to take place at Clerkenwell Green at 2pm but the march to begin at 4pm! In fact, the police demanded that the march move off just after 3pm. It ended up at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, at a truly awful 'festival', the one saving grace being that it must have cost a bit less than the £25,000 spent on the Barbican fiasco last year.

Despite the fact that 'official communism' could bring nothing to the march this year, it was a larger demonstration than in many previous years. It is not really worth going into all the other ways in which Sertuc showed how much it really would love to get rid of this march altogether but it is worthwhile dealing with its lack of internationalism.

Regular readers will know that the Turkish community in London makes up the vast bulk of the May Day march and yet at the truly awful 'festival' in Friends Meeting House after the march, not one

representative from the Turkish community was among the speakers.

Another example of British chauvinism came in *The Guardian* report on the march, the main thrust of which was that the "Stalinist old guard" was hanging on in Britain while democracy (ie, reaction) had started to flourish on May Day marches in other quarters. Incidentally, to prove this they used a 'quote' from a Leninist about how the revisionists in Moscow knew nothing about May Day. As to the Turkish contingents, the reporter described wailing men with droopy moustaches more suited to the kasbah. We look forward to bumping into this journalist called Jasper sometime!

One significant feature of the Turkish and Kurdish presence was the big drop in the size of the Menshevik contingent. The 'officials' have become thoroughly discredited as any sort of revolutionary organisation.

Our own celebrations of May Day ended with the Workers Theatre Movement club, The Internationale. It was a great success. For the first time, as well as organised spots, including WTM's rendition of an updated sketch on May Day and some very rousing Kurdish dancing from comrades in the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran, there were many, many contributions from the floor. We even had an Irish railworker, passing by on his way home from work, who came in and gave us a republican song! That's internationalism.

Gavin Kyle

## May Day: workers' day

